

## Message Text

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7110

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: THE NDP UNDER KIM YONG-SAM

SUMMARY: KIM YONG-SAM HAS KEPT HIMSELF AND NDP IN PUBLIC EYE AS FOCUS FOR OPPOSITION ELEMENTS BY MAINTAINING PRESSURE ON ROKG TO CHANGE YUSHIN CONSTITUTION. HE SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR MAJOR POLITICAL CHANGE BY THE SPRING. FOR NOW HE IS PLAYING A RELATIVELY PRUDENT GAME AND HAS NOT UNVEILED A SPECIFIC PLAN TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN QUOTE SYSTEM UNQUOTE. HOWEVER, STUDENT AND PRESS PROTEST ACTIVITY OR CONFRONTATION IN ASSEMBLY MAY FORCE KIM AND NDP TO ACT SOONER THAN THEY WOULD LIKE. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE TAKING OVER LEADERSHIP OF NDP IN AUGUST KIM YONG-SAM HAS MOVED THE PARTY BACK INTO ITS TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION ROLE AND HAS RESTORED PUBLIC INTEREST IN PARTY ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES. HE HAS CONSISTENTLY MADE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM THE KEY TO PARTY PLATFORM (THE NDP OCT. 21 SUBMITTED ITS FORMAL RESOLUTION TO THE ASSEMBLY CALLING FOR A BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE TO DRAFT A NEW CONSPTUTION). KIM'S REPEATED CALLS FOR QUOTE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER UNQUOTE UNDER A NEW CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE INTERPRETED IN RELATION TO HIS PORTRAYAL OF HIMSELF AS A REAL  
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OPPOSITION ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT; KIM

TAKES HIMSELF SERIOUSLY AS A POSSIBLE FUTURE ROK PRESIDENT.

2. AS NDP PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, KIM HAS BEEN MORE MODERATE AND SOBER IN TONE, IF NOT IN SUBSTANCE, IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT CRITICISM THAN MANY POLITICAL OBSERVERS HAD EXPECTED. ALTHOUGH HE HAS CALLED FOR RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES, FREEDOM OF PRESS AND SCHOOLS AND END TO KCIA, IN ADDITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, HE HAS KEPT NDP ACTIVITIES WITHIN ASSEMBLY CONTEXT. BY THESE DEMANDS KIM IS PLAYING UP TO MAJOR OPPOSITION ELEMENTS OUTSIDE OF THE POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE AND IS BEHAVING AS THE PUTATIVE LEADER OF THESE GROUPS. AT SAME TIME HE IS MOVING WITH PRUDENCE SO AS NOT TO GET AHEAD OF THE DOMESTIC SITUATION.

3. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS WHY KIM HAS BEEN ACTING WITH RELATIVE RESTRAINT. KIM HAS TOLD US THAT HE VIEWS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AS THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM NOW FACING ROKG, BUT THAT HE DOES NOT EXPECT ECONOMY TO REACH CRISIS POINT UNTIL EARLY NEXT YEAR. HE BELIEVES THAT WITHOUT VISUAL ECONOMIC WELL-BEING PARK GOVERNMENT WILL BE UNABLE JUSTIFY THE YUSHIN SYSTEM IN FACE OF INCREASING POLITICAL DISSENT. KIM HOPES GOVERNMENT WILL REALIZE NECESSITY FOR CONSTITUTION CHANGE, BUT IN ANY EVENT HE EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE THAT THE PRESENT QUOTE SYSTEM UNQUOTE WILL BE CHANGED BY SPRING REGARDLESS OF ROKG TACTICS. FURTHER, IF KIM WERE TO MOVE PREMATURELY NOW, HE OBVIOUSLY FEARS ROKG COULD RETALIATE AGAINST HIM BEFORE THE DOMESTIC CRISIS POINT DEVELOPS.

4. ANOTHER CONSIDERATION FOR KIM IS RENEWED INTRA-PARTY FACTIONALISM WHICH HAS SURFACED IN REACTION TO HIS EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE POWER UNDER HIS PERSONAL LEADERSHIP. A GROUP OF FORMER YU CHIN-SAN SUPPORTERS, LED BY VICE SPEAKER YI CHOL-SUNG, HAVE FORMED THE QUOTE NEW NON-MAINSTREAM GROUP UNQUOTE. YI HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN TO US AT WHAT HE CALLS KIM YONG-SAM'S QUOTE DICTATORIAL UNQUOTE RULE OF PARTY. ALTHOUGH YI HAS MADE NO PUBLIC CHALLENGE TO KIM, YI HAS HAD REPUTATION OF BEING CLOSE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND HE IS NOW ALMOST VISIBLY ON THE GOVERNMENT'S CONFIDENTIAL

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SIDE. WE ANTICIPATE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE YI AND OTHERS IN THE PARTY RECEPTIVE TO THEIR BLANDISHMENTS IN ORDER TO BRING NDP TO MODERATE ITS POSITION, OR FAILING THIS, TO CREATE PUBLIC IMAGE OF SELF-SEEKING NDP INTRA-PARTY RIVALRY AND FACTIONALISM.

5. YI'S GROUP NUMBERS ALMOST 20 OF THE 57 NDP ASSEMBLYMEN.

KIM MUST THEREFORE MOVE CAREFULLY SO THAT THE PUBLIC MOOD WILL FORCE YI AND OTHER LESS ACTIVIST ASSEMBLYMEN TO SUPPORT HIM, OR BE BRANDED AS PRO-GOVERNMENT.

6. OTHER MEMBERS OF NDP HAVE PUBLICLY SURFACED THREATS OF ASSEMBLY BOYCOTT, RESIGNATION FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OR NATIONWIDE SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION IF NDP IS BLOCKED IN ASSEMBLY. ANY OR ALL OF THESE TACTICS MAY BE USED IF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES REFUSE CONCESSION (INDICATIONS FOLLOWING OCT 25 MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT PARK AND GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLYMEN ARE FOR HARD LINE GOVERNMENT POSITION IN ASSEMBLY).

7. VISIT OF PRESIDENT FORD SO FAR APPEARS TO FIGURE LESS CLEARLY IN NDP STRATEGY. KIM HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT HE IS CONCERNED THAT MANY KOREANS WILL VIEW FORD VISIT AS GESTURE OF SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT PARK AND ROKG DOMESTIC POLICIES. NDP SPOKESMAN HAS ALSO TOLD US THAT HE THINKS VISIT WILL HELP SHORE UP GOVERNMENT. AS YET WE HAVE NO PRECISE READING OF HOW NDP WILL HANDLE SITUATION. HOWEVER, AS DATE FOR VISIT DRAWS NEAR KIM WILL INEVITABLY

CONSIDER STEPPED UP PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY ON DOMESTIC ISSUES JUST PRIOR TO VISIT TO FORCE SOME CONCESSION FROM ROKG AS THE PRICE OF THE ASSEMBLY FUNCTIONING. WE DOUBT THAT NDP WILL INITIATE ANY DIRECT ACTION AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL VISIT, ALTHOUGH NDP LEADERS MAY AT SOME POINT REQUEST THAT PRESIDENT FORD MEET WITH KIM IN ADDITION TO GOVERNMENT LEADERS, AS WELL AS PUBLICLY URGE USG TO PRESS PRESIDENT PARK FOR DOMESTIC REFORM.

8. SO FAR, KIM HIMSELF IS KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN AND IS OBVIOUSLY PREPARING HIS GROUND CAREFULLY RATHER THAN CONFIDENTIAL

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PRECIPITATING IMMEDIATE SHOWDOWN WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

9. KIM OBVIOUSLY PERCEIVES THE TIDE OF DOMESTIC EVENTS TO BE IN HIS FAVOR AND IS WAITING FOR A MOMENT OF CRISIS, OR A MAJOR GOVERNMENT MISTAKE, TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE SITUATION. FOR THE PRESENT HIS STRATEGY IS TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND MAINTAIN HIS IMAGE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP. THIS WILL NOT PRECLUDE A TOUGH LINE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, PARTICULARLY IF KIM JUDGES THE DOMESTIC MOOD AS JUSTIFYING THE RISK TO PARTY UNITY AND THE THREAT OF GOVERNMENT REACTION. INDEED RESURGENT STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND PRESS PROTESTS MAY WELL FORCE KIM AND THE NDP, AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, TO REACT, PROBABLY SOONER THAN THEY WOULD LIKE.

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## Message Attributes

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